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Elise M. Mauragis
The College at Brockport

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Peer Sexual Harassment in Schools:
A Sexual Harassment Program for 8th Grade Students
Elise M. Mauragis
State University of New York College at Brockport

Abstract

Peer sexual harassment in schools was discussed. Statistics about sexual harassment, the meaning of sexual harassment, laws about sexual harassment, and impacts that sexual harassment has on students was discussed. A program developed for eighth grade students was discussed, and evaluated. The students that participated in the program showed a knowledge increase of 38% on what sexual harassment means as well as a 53% increase on being able to name four different forms of sexual harassment. The author also found that education on sexual harassment was well taken with students rising awareness of knowing what to do if sexual harassment happened to them by 23%.

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Peer Sexual Harassment in Schools

Bullying has been recognized in our schools for a long time and many schools have programs for their children to identify and decrease acts of bullying (Batsche & Knoff, 1994; Newman-Carlson & Horne, 2004). Bullying can start as early as elementary school (AAUW, 1993; Pellegrino, 2002), and can progress throughout adolescence (Duncan & Lang, 1998). Bullying can be considered sexual harassment under certain circumstances (Stanley, 2000). Bullying and sexual harassment are similar due to the aspect of power that the perpetrator expresses over the victim (Marano, 1995; Schwartz, 2000). Unfortunately, peer sexual harassment in school is often neglected in the school setting, unlike bullying (Fineran & Benett, 1998). Schwartz (2000) added that sexual harassment among students is an extensive, and multifaceted, issue with considerable effects on the perpetrator, the victim, and the school environment.

Sexual harassment became widely noticed because of the Senate hearings involving Clarence Thomas and Anita Hill in 1991 (Landau, 1993; Stein, 1995). This case showed educational institutions that they were liable for compensatory damages under Title IX (Stein, 1995). Sexual harassment is a type of discrimination and is illegal as identified by Title IX of the Educational Amendments of 1972, Title VII of the Civil Rights Act and the 14th Amendment of the Constitution (Berlin, 1998; Schwartz, 2000; Stien, 1995). Students are legally protected against sexual harassment regardless of who the harasser may be (ex. student, teacher) (Stein, 1995). Many forms of sexual harassment happen between students. Some of these may be: sexual comments, jokes, gestures or looks; touching grabbing, or pinching in a sexual way; flashing (exposing one's genitals); mooning (exposing one's buttocks); spreading sexual rumors; etc. (AAUW, 1993; Nash, 1996; Stein & Sjostrom, 1994). All students are impacted by sexual

harassment, boys, girls, homosexuals and lesbians (Fineran & Benett, 1998; Stein 1999; Walling, 1997). Impacts of sexual harassment may be emotional, academic and students may even become physically sick (AAUW, 1993; Atkins, 1992; Schwartz, 1999; Roscoe & Strouse, 1994).

Justification for Program

Upon the author learning that she had to create a program for her thesis, she set up an appointment to talk to the middle school principal and counselors. During the meeting many ideas came up about bullying and a bullying program at a suburban-rural school district in Western New York State. It was finally decided that something should be done for the eighth grade students as a “wrap-up” of the bullying program already in place. The author came up with the idea about developing a sexual harassment program for eighth grade students. Middle school students are at the age where their bodies and views on relationships are changing. The most dramatic transition involves the move into puberty and the changes associated with relationships (Maccoby, 1998 as cited in Pellegrini, 2001). This period is when there is a gradual, yet significant, increase in contact between boys and girls (Pellegrini, 2001).

Students tend to be more flirtatious at this age and some question what might be sexual harassment or flirting (Nash, 1996). Students need to know what behavior is flirting and what sexual harassment is. Sexual harassment obstructs learning (Linn & Rousso, 2001) and also has impacts on students who are targets of sexual harassment (Schwartz, 2000). The author believes a sexual harassment program for students will help them decide what sexual harassment to them is. Scales (1989) also argued that it is important to teach children how to better handle decision about sexual issues and think about them more clearly. After reading about sexual harassment in schools and how prevalent it is in schools due to statistics from recent studies, the need for the program became more important. In his review of a couple studies done about sexual

harassment (AAUW, *Seventeen*), Linn (1993) concluded that 75 percent of students accounted being sexually harassed in school.

Literature Review

The literature review will address peer sexual harassment first by discussing the meaning of sexual harassment, next studies done on sexual harassment, then laws about sexual harassment. How homosexual and lesbian students are affected by sexual harassment will be talked about, and then impacts on students, next media influences, and lastly goals and objectives of the proposed study.

Meaning of Sexual Harassment

There are many definitions of sexual harassment (Shoop & Edwards, 1994; Shoop & Hayhow, 1994; Stanley, 2000; Stein 1999); however there is a common word in these definitions, which is “unwelcome.” Shoop and Edwards (1994) defined sexual harassment as any unwanted behavior of a sexual nature that gets in the way with the life of the target(s), and is unwelcome and nonreciprocal. Shoop and Hayhow (1994) argued that ‘unwelcome’ behavior is the key to defining sexual harassment. Schwartz stated, “Harassment includes use of sexist terms, comments about body parts, sexual advances, unwanted touching, gestures, taunting, sexual graffiti, and rumor mongering about a classmate’s sexual identity or activity” (p. 1). In the AAUW (American Association of University Women, 1993) survey, the meaning they gave the students was, “Sexual harassment is unwanted and unwelcome sexual behavior which interferes with your life. Sexual harassment is not behaviors that you like or want” (p. 6).

Curcio, Berlin and First (1996) described some behaviors that have to do with sexual harassment, they are:

- Using lewd or obscene language directed at an individual

- Making offensive sexual slurs
- Telling off-color jokes
- Spreading sexual rumors
- Writing and sending sexual notes or pictures
- Writing sexual graffiti
- Using sexist terms such as “babe,” “toots” or “bitch”
- Using commonly considered terms of endearment such as “honey or “sweetie”
- Referring to an individual’s body parts physically or verbally
- Leering or ogling
- Unwanted touching such as hugging, pinching, kissing, or grabbing
- Pulling someone’s clothing down or off
- Pulling your own clothes off
- Requiring sexual favors in exchange for special treatment or favors
- Attempting or committing rape (p. 33)

Other forms of sexual harassment may be, “snuggies” or pulling underwear up at the waist so it goes in between the buttocks, and being listed in “slam books,” which contain students names and have derogatory sexual comments written about them by other students (Strauss & Espeland, 1992 as cited in Fineran & Bennett, 1998). Many of these actions are allowed to continue in schools and often this behavior is labeled “flirting” or “initiation rights” that has to be tolerated (Stein, 1995).

Studies Done on Sexual Harassment

Sexual harassment became widely noticed in schools due to two national studies done in the early 1990's. The AAUW (American Association of University Women, 1993), with Louis Harris and Associates conducted a survey of 1,632 public school students in grades 8 through 11. Another study completed was a survey done for *Seventeen* magazine readers and was analyzed by the Wellesley Center for Research on Women's and National Organization for Women Legal Defense and Education Fund (Stein, Marshall & Tropp, 1993). Another study that will be discussed is Pellegrini's (2001) study on heterosexual relationships, aggression, and sexual harassment during the changeover from primary school through middle school.

The survey conducted in *Seventeen* magazine resulted in the 1993 report *Secrets in Public: Sexual Harassment in Our Schools* (Stein, Marshall & Tropp 1993). Over 4,000 girls returned the surveys and a random sample of 2,002 girls ranging in ages 9-19 were selected. Due to the readership of the magazine no boys responded to the survey. Ninety percent of the girls were in public schools, 6 percent were in private schools, and 3 percent were in parochial schools. Ninety-nine percent of the girls were in coeducational schools. Of those who responded 89% were White, 2% were African American, 3% were Latino, and 6% were of other backgrounds. The survey for *Seventeen* readers consisted of six questions and dealt with sexual harassment according to frequency (adult to student and peer to peer), type (physical and nonphysical), location, reaction to the harassment (ex. giggling, not doing anything), and school response to the harassment.

The study that was conducted by the AAUW and Louis Harris and Associates used a survey that had a 95% confidence level. This survey also contained representative samples for

Hispanic, White, and African American students. A questionnaire was given to the students regarding 14 forms of sexual harassment. These forms of sexual harassment were:

- Made sexual comments, jokes, gestures, or looks.
- Showed, gave, or left you sexual pictures, photographs, illustrations, messages, or notes.
- Wrote sexual messages/graffiti about you on bathroom walls, in locker rooms, etc.
- Spread sexual rumors about you.
- Said you were gay or lesbian.
- Spied on you as you dressed or showered at school.
- Flashed or “moonied” you.
- Touched, grabbed or pinched you in a sexual way.
- Pulled at your clothing in a sexual way.
- Intentionally brushed against you in a sexual way.
- Pulled your clothing off or down.
- Blocked your way or cornered you in a sexual way.
- Forced you to kiss him/her.
- Forced you to do something sexual, other than kissing. (p. 5)

This survey found that 47% of students were most likely to be sexually harassed for the first time between the grades of 6th and 9th grade (40% of boys and 54% of girls). The most common forms of sexual harassment were sexual comments (ex. bitch, whore) , jokes, gestures or looks (76% of girls and 56% of boys).

The most common forms of sexual harassment that the *Seventeen* survey found were also sexual comments, gestures or looks, which 89% of the girls reported (Stein, Marshall, & Tropp,

1993). Eighty three percent of the girls also reported being touched, pinched or grabbed. Thirty nine percent reported being sexually harassed every day.

Stein (1999) also described some themes from the *Seventeen* survey:

1. The public nature of sexual harassment, revealing that there were bystanders and observers to these events, some of whom were adult employees of the school
2. That the targets of the harassment were not passive in the face of this harassment, thereby belying the stereotypic notion that girls are passive victims
3. That when girls told school officials about the sexual harassment incidents, their stories were often dismissed or trivialized. (p. 12)

A two-year study done by Pellegrini (2001) investigated heterosexual relationships, aggression and sexual harassment throughout the move from primary school through middle school. In this study Pellegrini examined teen's use of aggression with same- and opposite- sex peers, aggression in the context of heterosexual relationships, male and female aggression against opposite-sex peers, and last a model of sexual harassment was tested. He also studied the degree to which middle school children acted together with peers of the opposite sex, as well as self-reported dating frequency. Pellegrini predicted that cross-sex interactions would increase with time and that middle school children would use playful strategies to initiate cross-sex interactions and that both boys and girls would target opposite-sex peer for aggression. For the purpose of this literature review the author will look at aggression in heterosexual relationships and the sexual harassment model.

Participants in this study were from a rural middle school system in North America. The schools were mostly European American (95%), with the rest being African Americans and even less Asian Americans. The middle schools were grades 6-8 and the sixth graders started out with

77 males and 61 females. The seventh grade students started out with 70 males and 59 females. The way this study was measured was through direct observational measures, self-report measures, and students' behaviors rated by research associates.

Pellegrini (2001) found the initial start of heterosexual contact began in sixth grade. He discovered that girls initiated more contact with boys at the end of sixth grade than at the beginning of sixth grade, as did boys with boys and girls with girls across the sixth grade. Also towards the end of sixth grade rough play was initiated between both sexes toward the opposite sex.

At the beginning of the study boys had higher bullying scores than girls, but boys bullying decreased with time. This decrease was most notable from the beginning to the end of sixth grade and from the end of sixth to the seventh grade. On the other hand girls bullying remained steady throughout sixth and seventh grade.

Physical aggression toward same- and opposite-sex peers was measured through direct-observation. Pellegrini (2001) found significant main effects for time, where aggression decreased with time and so did sex target of aggression, where boys were more frequently targets than girls. He also obtained results that suggested boys targeted girls least frequently, and that girls targeted other girls more frequently.

The sexual harassment measure used was based on the tool developed by the AAUW. Twelve questions were asked, with a 1 (*never*) to 5 (*daily*) response scale. Questions addressed issues of sexual comments, touching and forced sexual contact. Pellegrini (2001) compared boys and girls at the end of seventh grade but the difference between the two sexes was not significantly different.

Pellegrini (2001) did use a mediational prediction of sexual harassment. He used a model from Baron and Kenny (1986) that predicted that three direct paths would have a certain outcome variable. The first two paths are the predictor and the moderator, and the third path is the two combined. Pellegrini used this model to hypothesize that sexual harassment at the end of seventh grade should be predicted by a direct path, from aggression (in the form of bullying) at the start of sixth grade. There were two other paths that were dating frequency and aggression. The mediational analysis clarifies the relation between aggression and sexual harassment. Pellegrini (2001) found that bullies, who tended to be boys, also engaged in sexual harassment, and this relation was mediated by self-reported dating frequency. He stated that bullies that estimated their frequency of dating to be high also tended to harass their peers. Pellegrini also described that,

Sexual harassment at the end of seventh grade was, however predicted by bullying at the start of sixth grade, but mediated by dating frequency. Thus, bullies will become perpetrators of sexual harassment, especially if they become interested in opposite-sex dating. (p. 131)

Pellegrini's (2001) behavioral observations "suggest[s] that pushing and poking courtship behaviors increased for both boys and girls during the sixth grade year" (p. 129). "One boy poked, with an accompanying laugh, a specific girl; she reciprocated, by laughing as well" (p. 130). Pellegrini also described that rough play is one form of pushing and poking courtship and usually the males take part in this. Another finding was that teasing can be another form of pushing and poking courtship. Pellegrini describes this as a "relatively safe and ambiguous way in which to interact with peers of the opposite sex" (p. 121).

This study shows that there are aspects about middle school children that use pushing and poking as courtship. Bosworth , Espelage and Simon (1999) state that it is difficult to interpret what might be considered harassment so, pushing and poking may be considered sexual harassment by some students but not by others. In order to tell the difference between sexual harassment and flirting Nash (1996) argued it becomes sexual harassment when one person exercises power or control over another. Agreement is not needed in order to define someone sexually harassing the other (Stein & Sjostrom, 1994). The target defines what sexual harassment is to them, or what behaviors they may not want or feel uncomfortable with (Stein & Sjostrom).

Laws about sexual harassment

Legally, sexual harassment is deemed a form of sex discrimination and is considered illegal by several Federal laws, which are: Title VII of the Civil Rights Act of 1964 has been extended by some courts to include peer harassment in school; Title IX of the Education Amendments of 1972 has been used to financially compensate victims of harassment in schools; and Federal civil rights law 42 U.S.C. 1983, has also been used successfully to sue schools that failed to protect students from peer harassment (Sexual Harassment Guidance, 1997 as cited in Schwartz, 2000). Linn (1999) defined sexual harassment in legal terms as “a form of sex discrimination and a violation of a student’s right to equal protection” (p. 263). Courts will hold schools and staff responsible if they do not prevent or stop identified sexual harassment by students (Linn, 1999).

Title IX addresses the educational needs of minorities and women and is suppose to complement Title VII of the Civil Rights Act for women to gain skills and training for higher paying jobs (Fineran & Bennett, 1998; Shoop & Hayhow, 1994). Title IX also “prohibit[s]

sexual harassment in education and directed educational institutions to maintain a grievance procedure that allows for prompt and equitable resolution of all sex discrimination, including sexual harassment” (Fineran & Bennett, p. 57). Shoop and Hayhow explain that schools are responsible for all types of harassment and are legally responsible for monetary and compensatory damages. According to the Office for Civil Rights Guidance:

A school will be liable under Title IX if its students sexually harass other students if (1) a hostile environment exists in the school’s programs or activities; (2) the school knows or should have known of the harassment; and (3) the school fails to take immediate and appropriate corrective action... A school’s failure to respond to the existence of a hostile environment within its own programs or activities permits an atmosphere of sexual discrimination to permeate the educational program and results in discrimination prohibited by Title IX... Title IX does not make a school responsible for the actions of harassing students but rather for its own discrimination in failing to remedy it once the school has notice. (U.S. Department of Education, 1997a, p. 12039-12040 as cited in Stein, 1999).

Two forms of sexual harassment have been recognized by the courts and the Office of Civil Rights of the U.S. Department of Education, and they are: quid pro quo harassment and hostile-environment harassment (Berlin, 1998; Fineran & Bennett, 1998; Stein, 1999).

Quid pro quo refers to doing a “favor” for one in return for a “favor” or this for that. Stien (1999) stated that quid pro quo harassment takes place “when a school employee explicitly or implicitly conditions a student’s participation in an education program or activity or bases an educational decision on the student’s submission to unwelcome sexual advances, requests for sexual favors, or other verbal, nonverbal, or physical conduct of a sexual nature” (p. 3). Shoop

and Hayhow (1994) believe this can include special treatment by the teacher in return for sexual favors. This form of harassment applies to a person in power (ex. teacher) that makes decisions about grades if a student obeys their sexual orders (Fineran & Bennett, 1998). Shoop and Hayhow (1994) also stated that in quid pro quo, once deficiency of educational benefits has been proven, it then permits the victim to request the court to supply relief.

Hostile environment applies to harassing behavior of anyone in the school, which causes the school to be unpleasant, intimidating or offensive and interferes with the students work (Langelan, 1993). Stein (1999) described a hostile environment as “sexual harassment [that] constitutes unwelcome sexual advances, requests for sexual favors, and other verbal or physical conduct of a sexual nature when the conduct is sufficiently severe, persistent, or pervasive to limit a student’s ability to participate in or benefit from the education program” (p. 3).

Responsibilities of Schools

Stein (2001) argued that schools should put in place a curriculum about sexual harassment that is an ongoing program in the school, train all staff (which includes administrators, custodians, school secretaries, bus drivers, coaches, teachers, school counselors, playground and lunchroom supervisors and psychologists) and have one man and one woman in each building as the main person to go to if there is a complaint about sexual harassment or with questions. Curcio, Berlin and First (1996) also stated that school staff should be educated on the subject of sexual harassment. Wishnietsky (1997), and Eaton (1995) suggested that schools should have policies and procedures that deal with all forms of sexual harassment, whether faculty-student, faculty-faculty, or student-student. Wishnietsky also stated, “A goal of all educators should be to provide an educational environment where sexual harassment is not tolerated” (p. 262). Mandatory reporting is also an aspect about sexual harassment that Curcio,

Berlin and First (1996) argued that schools should enforce. Ross and Marlowe (1985) stressed that victims of sex offenders should report incidents of sexual harassment immediately. Along with mandatory reporting Stein (1999) stated, “At the minimum, the adult who receives the complaint needs to pass it along to the Title IX coordinator or the school employee who is responsible for receiving complaints-that would be the only way to gauge whether there is a pattern of harassment developing” (p. 91). After the incident is reported Cohan et al. (1996) argued that investigation should start immediately and to follow the policy or guidelines your school has set up for illegal acts, because sexual harassment falls under this category.

Other recommendations that Stein (2001) had for schools to reduce sexual harassment are “develop school-based codes of discipline for sexual harassment that ensure due process rights for the accused, as well as assurances that the student who makes the complaint will be protected from the harasser and his/her friends who might consider retaliation” (p. 152). Another suggestion Stein made for schools is to develop a school-based restraining order that would protect the student(s) that have made a complaint of harassment against another student(s) and to create multiple strategies for resolution (ex. face-to-face meetings between the harasser and the target that have to be voluntary and have adults present in the room), offer counseling to the harasser and harassed, involve parents, administer sexual harassment surveys that include questions that inquire about the relationship between the harasser and the target (ex. were they in a dating relationship? Did one person want to date the other, who wasn’t interested? Is this harassment due to a romance (mutual or otherwise) that went sour?). In order for schools to be a safer place McGowan (1999) stated that students should be informed of their rights and staff and administrators should be trained to handle issues of sexual harassment. Curcio, Berlin and First (1996) also argued for students to have a secure environment:

It is important that administrators approach the topic of sexuality in a caring, concerned, and ethical manner and that they work with parents to gain the support and guidance that can ensure constructive action. Strategies, guidelines, policies, and constructive attitudes can help school officials fulfill their responsibility to provide a safe and healthy school environment and ultimately enable them to create healthy communities containing healthy schools that educate healthy children: children who are neither perpetrators nor victims of sexual harassment, prejudice, or abuse; children who can grow up to be healthy adults. (p. 3)

Homosexual and Lesbian Students

The gay teen is subjected to harassment from other peers, ranging from name-calling – “fag,” “dyke,” “queer” – to physical abuse (Walling, 1997). Other names that may be said are faggot, fruit, homo, fairy, wimp or sissy (Nash, 1996). Eaton (1995) stated that other forms of harassment can be locker defacement, notes, taunting and even beatings and this can happen to anyone suspected of being gay. Much of the violence directed at homosexuals is a main problem that has its roots in the school peer group” (Walling, 1997). Some of the most violent gendered behaviors are inflicted upon gay or lesbian students or those students who are perceived to be or friendly with the students that are labeled as gay or lesbian (Stein, 1999). A reason why students might not be tolerant to homosexuals is because they are not taught to. Many schools are reluctant to teach about teenagers questioning their sexual orientation or any other homosexual issues (Curcio, Berlin & First, 1996; Walling, 1997). Eaton (1995) argued that some reasons why sexuality is a taboo subject might be because of the messages received from schools, churches, synagogues, and media.

Nash (1996) stated that schools have the responsibility to provide gay teens with the same safe environment as they assure others. An article in *Education Digest* stated:

The American Academy of Pediatrics has urged members to provide services to gay youth; the National Education Association says every school should provide counseling to gay students; and the Child Welfare League of America, a major children's advocacy group, urges efforts to help gay youth. (Stover, 1992, p. 36)

Impacts on Students

Students that are sexually harassed repeatedly may become less academically successful (Schwartz, 1999), and it also can threaten their emotional well-being and may get in the way of career goals (Roscoe & Strouse, 1994). Atkins (1992) also stated that victims can suffer physical illness due to being repeatedly sexually harassed. According to the AAUW (1993) survey, nearly 1 in 4 students (23%) who have been sexually harassed say that one outcome of the experience is not wanting to attend school: 33% of girls report this-39% of African Americans, compared with 33% of white and 29% of Hispanic girls. The survey also found 12% of boys respond this way: 14% of Whites, 9% of African Americas, and 8% of Hispanics. Nearly 1 in 4 girls (24%) say that harassment caused them to stay home from school or cut a class. Also, nearly 1 in 4 students (23%) report not wanting to talk as much in class after experiencing harassment, with 32% of girls and 13% of boys affected. Almost half the African American girls who have been harassed (42%) respond this way, compared with Hispanic girls (35%) and white girls (30%).

Shoop and Hayhow (1994) also argued that sexual harassment leads to the victim feeling incompetent and that this feeling of incompetence effects other areas in the victim's life. They add that these incompetent feelings may lead to a good student doubting their skills to deal with

challenges that their education might have, they might be reluctant to take risks associated with developing healthy relationships. Roscoe and Strouse (1994) also stated that sometimes the victim “will assume responsibility for the harassing behaviors and blame themselves” (p. 112). Linn and Rousso (2001) stated that the target will feel guilty and try to figure out what they could have done to prevent the harassment. According to the AAUW (1993) survey the some emotional impacts of sexual harassment are embarrassment, nearly 2 in 3 girls (64%) report feeling this way, compared with 36% of boys. Similarly, 37% percent of students say that sexual harassment has caused them to feel self-conscious – more than 1 in 2 girls (52%) report this, compared with 1 in 5 boys (21%). Slightly less than one-third of students (29%) say sexual harassment makes them feel less sure or less confident about themselves – 43% of girls and 14% of boys say this. When asked if sexual harassment has caused them to feel afraid or scared, nearly 1 in 4 (24%) say yes – 39% of girls and 8% of boys responded this way.

Many of these statistics suggest that boys do not experience as much sexual harassment as girls, yet contrary to what most people believe, boys are sexually harassed. Boys are more likely to be victims of sexual harassment if they do not conform to gender stereotypes, and much of the sexual harassment of boys is committed by other boys (Shoop & Edwards, 1994). Stein (1999) stated “there is a great deal of social pressure exerted on boys, both by their peers and by their elders, not to define unwanted sexual attention coming from the girls as ‘sexual harassment,’ or as ‘unwanted’” (p. 92). Boys may also be harassed by other boys if they are not considered to be “masculine” enough (McGowan, 1999).

Media Influences

Stein (1999) argued that media portrays sexual harassment as only happening to girls and the perpetrators are always boys. Ma, Stewin and Mah (2001) suggested that some gender stereotypes play a role in the tolerance of harassment. They go on to say that most cultures treat physical aggression as a male trait and let it go on because it is a form of masculinity. To also confirm their manhood, boys act out their contempt for women (Frye, 1983). Boys learn that they are the superior sex and can therefore do what they want (Shoop & Hayhow, 1994). Larkin (1994) found that most verbal attacks on women (calling them names such as ‘bitch,’ ‘bimbo,’ ‘fucking broad’) are allegations that women were inferior to or less capable than men. Historically the social code of male domination determined if a woman was “good” or “bad” (Wishnietsky, 1997).

Stein (1999) stated in the media, “girls are portrayed as victims, as frail and whiney, or on the other hand, as seductive and manipulative; whereas boys are cast as sufferers of hormones run amok or as playful creatures engaging in harmless fun that is misunderstood by adults and by girls” (p. 5). We see this happening in popular movies and music videos for teenagers today. The movie “American Pie” shows us four teenage boys who make a pact to have sex by their prom, because they suffer from their hormones and believe they should no longer be virgins after high school. In music videos we also see women hardly dressed, dancing seductively while men sing about women’s body parts or how they are going to have sex with them. In a study done on sex-role stereotyping in MTV videos, it was found females were often shown as sex objects and often wore more revealing clothing more frequently than men (Seidman, 1999). Goffman (1976 as cited in Jones, 1991) found numerous examples of subtle stereotyping in the portrayal of women and men in an analysis of “gender advertisements.” One of these examples were,

“ritualization of subordination (an overabundance of images of women lying on floors and beds or as objects of men’s mock assaults)” (Jones, 1991, p. 232). In the study done on sex-role stereotypes in MTV videos, it was also found that males were shown to be aggressive, independent, unemotional and competent, whereas females were shown as passive, dependent, and emotional (Seidman, 1999). Cohan et al. (1996) also argued that boys and girls are taught the ‘appropriate’ gender roles. They stated that boys “are generally socialized to be aggressive, powerful, unemotional, and controlling, whereas girls in our culture are largely socialized to be dependent and less aggressive” (p. 34).

Goals and Objectives/Proposed Study

The author plans to implement a program about sexual harassment at a suburban-rural school district in Western New York State. The author’s goals of implementing this program were:

1. To have students gain knowledge of what sexual harassment is and differences between flirting and sexual harassment.
2. To have students know how to stop sexual harassment from happening and know where to go if sexual harassment does happen.

The author also gave a survey to the students to find out how frequently sexual harassment happens between students. The objectives of this study were to increase student’s knowledge of what sexual harassment is, raise awareness of sexual harassment, and let students know what they can do if it happens to them or if they are a witness to sexual harassment. The author also wants to get the students to talk about this subject so it is not so uncomfortable to discuss if it should happen to them.

Method

The author met with counselors and the principal at a middle school in Western New York to determine if a sexual harassment program was needed for the eighth graders. Letters were mailed out to parents to tell them about the program and if they did not want their child to participate to sign and return the letter to the counseling office. Where the program took place, who the participants were, what the sexual harassment program entailed and how the author evaluated the program is discussed.

Setting

The program took place at a suburban-rural middle school in Western New York State. The middle school consists of approximately 290 students grades sixth through eight. The student/teacher ratio for the middle school is 13:1. The average household income is approximately \$46,000 annually. The percentage of students who are members of families whose primary support is a public welfare program is 11.3% (based on those receiving free lunches). The middle school is attached to the high school, and consists of ninth through twelfth grade students. High school and middle school students share the gymnasium, counseling center, nurse band and choir room.

This program was developed for the eighth grade students as a “wrap-up” of the bullying program already in place at the school. The program was taught in the 8th graders SAW (Student Achievement Workshop) classes. The principal, counselors, counselor intern and teachers decided to implement the program for all 8th grade students. The teachers and principal wanted all students to know first hand about the subject, instead of a group of 8th grade students being taught the subject and telling others wrong information to their classmates. In order to teach all of the 8th grade students the program had to be taught over two semesters. During the first

semester there are three classes that had approximately 18 students each. During the second semester there were two classes consisting of approximately 22 students each. This was the way the school schedule had arranged the classes and students. The principal wanted the classes to be taught with little time in between them, so students would get all of the correct information about sexual harassment from a class rather than their friends. The program was implemented at the end of the first semester and at the beginning of the second semester in order to reach all of the 8th grade students about sexual harassment.

Participants

The participants were eighth grade students at a suburban-rural school district in Western New York State. All of the 8th grade students were taught about sexual harassment, unless a parent did not want them to take part in the program. During the first semester one parent did not want their child to participate. There are approximately 97 students in eighth grade and ninety-six participated in the program. Fifty-four students were male and forty-two were female ranging in age from 13 to 15. There were 87 Caucasian students, 10 African American students and one Asian American student.

Procedure

First the Author met with the 8th grade team a couple months prior to starting the program to find out what would be the best time and class to implement the program and to get feedback on what she already had planned for the program. The teachers looked at the materials that were handed out and gave some suggestions on what could be added and taken out. It was also decided the author could carry out her program in the 8th graders SAW (Student Achievement Workshop) classes.

Three weeks before the program started, a letter (see Appendix A) was sent out to the 8th graders parents to let them know what their children were going to be learning. Parents were given the option of not letting their child participate in the program. For the first semester only one student's parent sent the letter back signed the bottom where it stated "I do not want my child to participate in the sexual harassment program." In the second semester no parents sent the letter back not wanting their child to participate.

During the first semester the program started on January 4, 2005 and ended on January 13, 2005. There were 2 "A" day classes one 2nd block (9:09-10:09), and the other 4th block (11:37-12:37). There was one "B" day class 4th block (11:37-12:37). The second semester for the school started on January 31, 2005. During the second semester the program started on February 1, 2005 and ended on February 10, 2005. There was one "A" day class 2nd block (9:09-10:09) and one "B" day class 4th block (11:37-12:37). A lesson plan (see Appendix B) was made for all three classes.

Class One (approximately 1 hour)

A pre test (see Appendix C) was given to each class to find out what they already knew about sexual harassment. A survey (see Appendix D) to look into when, where and what types of sexual harassment has already happened to the students was also given out for students to fill out. Ground rules for the class were set. The author decided on three for class which were:

1. What is discussed in class stays in class.
2. If you want to tell the class about an incident you were apart of or witnessed do not use anyone's name.

3. Raise your hand when you want to say something and listen when someone is speaking.

Rules one and two were for the protection of students. If there was anything discussed that was not appropriate for school, such as saying words like bitch, whore or talking about flipping someone off, the author did not want the students to be talking about it outside of class. The third rule was for the students and author to make sure everyone was heard that wanted to speak. The first two rules were also taken from the teachers guide “Flirting or Hurting,” by Stein and Sjostrom (1994).

Next was a discussion about what the students thought was flirting or sexual harassment (see Appendix E). Three headings were written down on a board, which were “Verbal or Written,” “Gestures” and “Physical.” Under each heading were two subtitles that were “Flirting” and “Harassment.” First the class was focused on verbal or written exchanges that they thought might be flirting, next verbal or written harassment. Then gestures that they thought would be flirting and next gestures that they thought might be harassment. Last we discussed physical interactions that they thought might be flirting and then interactions that they thought may be harassment. Under each list was a list of “Depends”. If during the discussion the students thought that something written under flirting might be harassment or visa versa a list of what criteria they were basing their opinion on when under the list of “Depends.” Discussion questions from that lesson were asked to the students.

Lastly a packet of statistics (see Appendix F) from the AAUW (1993) poll was handed out. A discussion followed of what the students thought was surprising or what they already knew to be true.

Class Two (approximately 1 hour)

First two handouts were passed out, which were one titled “What is sexual harassment” (Appendix H) and the other was titled “Strategies for students to prevent sexual harassment” (see Appendix I). The class read the hand out “What is sexual harassment” out loud and read “Strategies for students to prevent sexual harassment” out loud to page 34. They were asked to read the rest of the hand out on their own. They were then asked if they had any questions or comments about either hand out. Discussion questions from page 22 (see Appendix J) in “Flirting or Hurting,” by Stein and Sjostrom (1994), were then asked to the students. Next statement numbers 8, 9, 12, 13 (see Appendix K), from “Flirting or Hurting” pages 30 through 31, were read out loud to the students one by one. After each statement was read the students would decide if they disagreed or agreed with the statements and discuss their opinion about the statement.

Lyrics to two popular songs were next handed out (see Appendix L), which are called “Hot in Herre” and “Let’s Get it Started.” The students were asked to read the lyrics while the songs played. They were also asked to find what may be considered sexual harassment if it was said or done in schools as it was expressed in the lyrics. After the songs were played the students were asked what they found might be sexual harassment in the songs. Music videos and movies were discussed on how they might make sexual harassment look acceptable to go on in school and in their everyday lives.

Class Three (approximately 1 hour)

A video called “Sexual Harassment” was shown to the students that took approximately thirty minuets. The students were then asked if they had any questions or comments about the video. The post- test and survey were then given out to the students to fill out. After the students completed the post- test and survey they were asked if they had any questions or

comments about anything they learned. They were also told if they wanted to continue talking about sexual harassment they could come to the counseling center either by themselves or in a group. No students came to the counseling center for any questions or to talk about the subject further, therefore no treatment was used.

Evaluation

The pre- and post-tests were the means for evaluation of the program implemented over three sessions. The pre- test was the first thing given to the students and the post-test was the last. There were approximately seven days in between the pre- and post-tests. The author designed the test containing seven questions, six of which were used for evaluation. Questions were designed to assess if the students knew what sexual harassment was, examples of it and what to do if it happens to them. Questions one through three dealt with the meaning of sexual harassment, and forms it could take. Questions four and five were true/false questions asking if there were laws protecting the rights of students and if sexual harassment only occurs if the harasser is male. The last question asked if the students know what they could do if they thought they were the target of sexual harassment. Analysis of the results will be in percentages of the students correctly answering questions. Pre- and post- tests will be analyzed for both semesters and a total of both semesters will follow. The author will go through each question stating the percentage of students who answered it correctly. As for the survey the author will compare all students' answers and the pre- and post- surveys.

Results

The author's goals were to have students gain knowledge of what sexual harassment is and differences between flirting and sexual harassment, and to have students know how to stop sexual harassment from happening and know where to go if sexual harassment does happen. As the results are discussed they will show the goals being met.

After correcting the pre- and post- tests, the author found significant increases in knowledge about sexual harassment. The first semester and the second semester both knew more on the post- test than the students did on the pre- tests. In response to the first question "I know what sexual harassment means" in the first semester only 18% answered the question correctly and in the second semester 51% answered the question correctly (see Table 1). On the post- tests 72% from the first semester and 70% from the second semester answered the question correctly. In total for both semesters 33% answered the question correctly on the pre- test and 71% answered the question correctly on the post- test, an increase of 38%. Correct answers for question one were unwanted and/or unwelcome sexual attention.

Question two asked if the students could recognize four forms of sexual harassment. The results for correct answers fairly increased on the post- test. During the first semester only 2% answered the question correctly on the pre- test and 20% (see Table 1) during the second semester. Fifty eight percent for the first semester and 70% for the second semester answered the question correctly on the post- test. A total of 63% of the students answered the question correctly on the post- test, which was an increase of 53% from the pre- test. There were many acceptable answers for this question they were: name calling (ex. bitch, whore, faggot), grabbing at someone's clothes, cornering someone, slapping someone's butt, spreading sexual rumors, writing sexual graffiti, etc.

For question number three, “I know what ‘unwelcome ness’ means,” the results were positive, but not as significant as the author had hoped. The percentage of correct answers from the first semester was 12% and the second semester was 20% (see Table 1). For the post- test 49% in the first semester and 43% in the second semester answered the question correctly. A total of 10% answered the question correctly on the pre- test and 46% answered the question correctly on the post- test, an increase of 36%. The correct answer for this question was “unwanted.”

Question four and five were true or false questions. Question four was “There are federal laws about sexual harassment to protect your rights as a student.” Question five was “Sexual harassment only occurs if the harasser is male.” The results from these questions surprised the author, because she did not think so many students knew that there were federal laws for them and that males are not the only ones that can sexually harass others. The total of both semesters produced 96% correct answers on the pre- and post- tests (see Table 1) for question four. A total of 98% answered question five right on the pre- test and a total of 99% answered the question correctly on the post- test. The correct answer for question four was “true” and the correct answer for question five was “false.”

The last question asked students to name two things they could do if they thought they were the targets of sexual harassment. The first semester 44% answered the question correctly on the pre- test and 54% answered the question correctly on the pre- test during semester two (see Table 1). For the post- test 70% answered the question correctly during the first semester and 73% answered the question correctly for the second semester. A total of 48% answered the question correctly on the pre- test and 71% answered the question correctly on the post- test, which was an increase of 23%.

Table 1

Percentages of correct answers from students

Question	Semester One		Semester Two		Total	
	pre-	post-	pre-	post-	pre-	post-
1. I know what sexual harassment means	18%	72%	51%	70%	33%	71%
2. I can recognize four forms of sexual harassment	2%	58%	20%	70%	10%	63%
3. I know what "unwelcome ness" means	12%	49%	7%	43%	10%	46%
4. There are federal laws about sexual harassment to protect your rights as a student	100%	98%	93%	93%	96%	96%
5. Sexual harassment only occurs if the harasser is male	98%	100%	100%	98%	98%	99%
6. Two things I can do if I feel I am the target of sexual harassment	44%	70%	54%	73%	48%	71%

In correcting the surveys the author found slight increases and decreases in what aspects of sexual harassment students said they experienced in school. For the pre survey (see Appendix D) 37% of the eighth graders said they had never been the target of sexual comments, jokes, teasing, gestures or looks (see Table 2). The amount of eighth graders went up to 38% on the post- survey that said they had never been the target of sexual comments, jokes, teasing, gestures or looks. Three percent responded very often, 7% indicated often, 17% stated occasionally, and 36% responded rarely for number one ("I have been the target of sexual comments, jokes, teasing, gestures or looks") on the pre- survey. On the post- survey students that indicated very often went up to 6%, up to 9% that responded often, down to 16% that stated occasionally, and down to 31% that indicated rarely.

Question two asked the students if they had their clothing pulled in a sexual way. On the pre- survey 1% of the eighth grade class answered very often to this question, 2% responded often, 4% indicated occasionally, 15% responded rarely, and 78% answered never. For the post- survey students that answered very often remained the same (1%), often went down to 1%, occasionally went up to 9%, rarely went up to 18% and those that stated never went down to 71%.

For question three (“I have had sexual rumors spread about me.”), on the pre- survey 2% of the students answered very often, 1% responded often, 10% stated occasionally, 22% indicated rarely, and 65% answered never. There was little change in percentages for the post- survey. There was no change in the students that answered very often to this question (1%). Those that answered often went up to 5%, occasionally went up to 13%, rarely went down to 18% and never went down to 62%.

Question four asked the students if they ever had their way blocked in a sexual way. Two percent of the students stated very often, 1% indicated often, 4% responded occasionally, 9% answered rarely, and 84% stated never, on the pre- survey. On the post- survey 1% of the students responded very often, 0% indicated often, 6% stated occasionally, 15% answered rarely, and 78% responded they never had their way blocked in a sexual way.

On the pre- survey 5% of the students answered very often to question five (“I have been touched, grabbed, or pinched in a sexual way.”), 7% responded often, 7% stated occasionally, 17% indicated rarely and 64% answered never. For the post- survey 3% stated very often to question five, 7% indicated often, 12% responded occasionally, 19% stated rarely, and 59% answered never.

Question six asked the students if they had been shown or given sexual pictures, photographs, illustrations, messages or notes. On the pre- survey 2% stated very often, 2% responded often, 13% indicated occasionally, 16% answered rarely and 67% responded never. For the post- survey 1% answered very often, 0% indicated often, 3% stated occasionally, 31% responded rarely, and 65% stated they had never been shown or given sexual pictures, photographs, illustrations, messages or notes.

For question seven (“I have been physically intimidated by another student.”), the pre- survey results were as follows: 1% answered very often, 1% indicated often, 7% responded occasionally, 21% stated rarely and 70% responded never. The post- survey results for question seven were: 4% indicated very often, 1% answered often, 11% stated occasionally, 15% responded rarely, and 69% answered never.

Question eight asked the students if they had stayed home or cut a class because they felt intimidated. The pre- survey results were: 2% stated very often, 0% answered often, 0% responded occasionally, 11% indicated rarely, and 87% answered never. The post- survey results for question eight were: 0% stated very often, 0% responded often, 1% indicated occasionally, 5% stated rarely, and 94% answered never.

Pre- survey results for question nine (“I have felt unsafe in school”), were: 3% stated very often, 1% responded often, 5% answered occasionally, 15% indicated rarely, and 76% stated never. Post- survey results were: 3% responded very often, 1% indicated often, 8% answered occasionally, 14% stated rarely and 74% indicated never.

For question ten (“I have been penalized, threatened, or further harassed as a result of complaining about or reporting sexual harassment.”), the pre- survey results were: 1% responded very often, 1% stated often, 4% indicated occasionally, 7% answered rarely, and 87% stated

never. Post- survey results for question ten were: 4% responded very often, 1% answered often, 4% stated occasionally, 3% indicated rarely, and 87% responded never.

Table 2 (Survey for types of sexual harassment and how often it happens)

	Pre- Survey						Post- Survey				
	Very often	Often	Occasionally	Rarely	Never		Very often	Often	Occasionally	Rarely	Never
1. I have been the target of sexual comments, jokes, teasing, gestures, or looks.	3%	7%	17%	36%	37%		6%	9%	16%	31%	38%
2. I have had my clothing pulled in a sexual way.	1%	2%	4%	15%	78%		1%	1%	9%	18%	71%
3. I have had sexual rumors spread about me.	2%	1%	10%	22%	65%		2%	5%	13%	18%	62%
4. I have had my way blocked in a sexual way.	2%	1%	4%	9%	84%		1%	0%	6%	15%	78%
5. I have been touched, grabbed, or pinched in a sexual way.	5%	7%	7%	17%	64%		3%	7%	12%	19%	59%
6. I have been shown or given sexual pictures, photographs, illustrations, messages, or notes.	2%	2%	13%	16%	67%		1%	0%	3%	31%	65%
7. I have been physically intimidated by another student.	1%	1%	7%	21%	70%		4%	1%	11%	15%	69%
8. I have stayed home or cut a class because I felt intimidated.	2%	0%	0%	11%	87%		0%	0%	1%	5%	94%
9. I have felt unsafe in school.	3%	1%	5%	15%	76%		3%	1%	8%	14%	74%
10. I have been penalized, threatened, or further harassed as a result of complaining about or reporting sexual harassment.	1%	1%	4%	7%	87%		4%	1%	4%	3%	87%

In tallying the scores on the pre- and post- survey of where the students experienced sexual harassment the author found many increases and a few small decreases (see Table 3). For the pre- survey 51% of the students stated sexual harassment happened “In the hall,” there was an increase to 59% on the post- survey. Thirty percent responded sexual harassment happened “In the classroom” on the pre- survey and 45% indicated it occurred there on the post- survey. Twenty six percent responded sexual harassment occurred “On school grounds outside the school (other than the parking lot)” on the pre- survey, and 36% stated it occurred there on the post- survey. On the pre- survey 14% of the students responded sexual harassment occurred “In the cafeteria” and on the post- survey 30% indicated it occurred there. Nine percent of eighth grade students stated sexual harassment happened “at a field trip location, including another school for away games” on the pre- survey, 15% stated it happened there on the post- survey. Seven percent said sexual harassment happened “In the parking lot” on the pre- survey and 12% indicated it happened there on the post- survey. Eight percent responded that sexual harassment happened “In or near the locker room” on the pre- survey and 17% stated it happened there on the post- survey. Six percent indicated sexual harassment happened “In the rest room” on the pre- survey and 5% responded that it happened there on the post- survey. Zero percent stated sexual harassment happened “In the driver education car” on the pre- survey and 2% stated it happened there on the post- survey. Fourteen percent responded that sexual harassment happened “On school transportation on the way to school/on the way home/ on a school trip” on the pre- survey and 10% indicated it happened there on the post- survey. Six percent of students stated sexual harassment happened “On public transportation on the way to school or on the way home” on the pre- survey, and 5% responded that it happened there on the post- survey.

Table 3 (Survey for where sexual harassment happens)

Where	PRE-	POST-
In the hall	51%	59%
In a classroom	30%	45%
On school grounds outside the school (other than the parking lot)	26%	36%
In or near the gym/playing field/pool	14%	18%
In the cafeteria	14%	30%
At a field trip location, including another school for away games	9%	15%
In the parking lot	7%	12%
In or near the locker room	8%	17%
In the rest room	6%	5%
In the driver education car	0%	2%
On school transportation on the way to school/on the way home/on a school trip	14%	10%
On public transportation on the way to school or on the way home	6%	5%

After the author looked at the pre- and post- surveys of when the students experienced sexual harassment the author found that there were increases in each of the times that were given (see Table 4). On the pre- survey 14% of students responded that they experienced sexual harassment before school and on the post- survey 20% stated they experienced it before school. Forty-one percent of eighth grade students indicated they experienced sexual harassment between classes on the pre- survey and 53% stated they experienced it at that time on the post- survey. Twenty seven percent of students indicated they experienced sexual harassment in class on the pre- survey and 40% responded that they experienced it in class on the post- survey. On the pre- survey 14% of students stated they experienced sexual harassment during lunch and 23% indicated they experienced it there on the post- survey. Two percent of students responded that they experienced sexual harassment during recess on the pre- survey and 6% stated they experienced it there on the post- survey.

Table 4 (Survey for when sexual harassment happens)

When	PRE-	POST-
Before school	14%	20%
Between classes	41%	53%
In class	27%	40%
During lunch	14%	23%
During recess	2%	6%

Discussion

The findings of this educational program were seen as positive due to the fact the goals and objectives were reached. This program was intended for students to recognize sexual harassment and know what they can do if they see it happening or if it happens to them. After compiling the results from the tests and surveys, the author was pleased to see that the program was effective due to the increase of the percent of students who got the questions right on the post- tests. The percentage for all students increased 38% for question one, 53% for question two, 36% for question three, and 23% for question six (see Table 1). The students learned what sexual harassment was, have a heightened awareness to recognize it when it happens, and know where to go if it does happen. The students also learned the differences between flirting and harassment in the first class. The goal for the students to know how to stop sexual harassment from happening and to know where to go if it does happen was met because, the post- test showed there was also an increase of correct answers for the questions about those subjects.

Pre- and post- test questions

The questions used in the pre- and post- tests (see Appendix C) were developed by the author in hopes of reaching the simple goals of the program. They worked as a guide in determining what the students already knew about the subject of sexual harassment. It was a surprise to the author that most students were knowledgeable in some areas of sexual harassment

that were on the pre- test. The questions on the test also gave students an idea of what was going to be discussed for their brief time with the author.

In response to question number one (“I know what sexual harassment means”), students scores were very low on the pre-test, which showed that they knew little of what being sexually harassed meant (see Table 1). This question was meant to gauge what the students currently knew. The beginning result was consistent with what the author expected for the first semester. The second semester surprised the author with how many students wrote the correct answer. The author was told that a couple weeks prior to teaching her second semester students the eighth grade teachers had split girls and boys up to talk about sexual harassment for one class period. At the post- test there was an increase of knowledge about what sexual harassment meant. This result showed that the information given and shown by the author was accepted and learned by the students.

Question two (“I can recognize four forms of sexual harassment”), the author thought was clear and straightforward for the students to understand. During the first class the author had a discussion that students participated in on naming many forms of sexual harassment. Also during the second class the handout, “What is sexual harassment,” had examples of sexual harassment written on it. On some of the post- tests the students wrote “physical,” “verbal,” “gestures” and did not write down a fourth one. The author wanted examples of sexual harassment also, but thought the students argued they needed four specific forms of sexual harassment. This question can certainly be changed for better understanding of what it is asking for.

At pre- test many students thought “unwelcome ness,” question three, meant that one could not come in or that they were unwelcome. The author specifically told the students in

class two that the meaning of “unwelcome ness” was unwanted. While the statistics show that there was an increase of 36% total (see Table 1) of students knowing the answer, the author had hoped that more than half of the entire 8th grade would know the correct answer. The author figured that at least 46% of students were paying attention when she was talking about unwelcome ness or maybe some students forgot the meaning, since the post- test was taken in the last class.

Questions four, (“There are federal laws about sexual harassment to protect your rights as a student”), and five, (“Sexual harassment only occurs if the harasser is male”), were true/false questions. The author was very surprised at how many students knew the correct answers to these two questions. Almost the entire eighth grade students knew the answers to both of these questions on the pre- test and post- test. There was one student in the second semester that decided to write “I don’t know” for every question, including the true/false. There was a fifty percent chance for the student to get each question right; unfortunately the student chose not to circle one or the other.

For the last question the author was pleased with the results. There was a total of a 23% increase for the students writing down the right answer. One of the authors goals was to have students know what they can do if they think they are the target of sexual harassment, instead of keeping it to themselves.

Survey

The purpose of the survey (Appendix D) was to find out if students were experiencing sexual harassment in their school, where and when. The author thought this survey would help teachers and staff know where most sexual harassment was happening in their school and what students were experiencing. She hoped that they would use this information to be more watchful

in their classes or even in the hallways, since this is where most students experienced sexual harassment (59% in the hall and 45% in a classroom, on the post- survey). The author was surprised that sexual harassment was happening right in students' classes when the teacher was there, yet this was the second most common place that students experienced sexual harassment in the AAUW (1993) survey. Teachers and staff cannot be solely responsible for stopping sexual harassment, yet Linn (1999) suggested that they should actively enforce the schools policy on sexual harassment. Students can also do their part on stopping sexual harassment, the AAUW (2004) suggested that students start a group that works on sexual harassment issues or even rewrite their schools sexual harassment policy. Students can also become more aware of sexual harassment by participating in a sexual harassment program done in their school.

The author also wondered if she should have asked about gender on the survey. After reading other surveys and teaching the classes she figured the gender gap of who gets harassed probably would not have been much different from other surveys. In the AAUW (1993) survey 66% of girls and 49% of boys say that they had experienced sexual harassment "often" or "occasionally." While teaching the class the author found that most of the males in the classes did not take the topic very seriously. They would tend to make jokes or laugh about some of the ways that people could sexually harass others. This might be because if they did take the subject seriously then they might be considered not to be "masculine," enough as McGowan (1999) previously stated. The social pressure placed on boys not to suggest that some sexual attention from girls is unwanted (Stein, 1999), could also be a reason the boys in class did not take sexual harassment seriously. The author also slightly feared that she may have been teaching the students new ways to sexually harass their peers, yet she was also shocked at some the things they would say that might be considered sexual harassment to another person.

Analysis of the lesson plan

The author thought that class one was a great beginning to the start of the sexual harassment program. The lesson about flirting and harassment really got students to talk and participate in all of the classes (see Appendix E). The author was able to gauge what the students actually knew and what they had misinterpreted as flirting or harassment. Male and female students were also able to discuss more openly what they liked when someone was flirting with them or when it had gone too far and they felt uncomfortable. Eaton (1995) argued that students found the issue more relevant if harassment was first discussed in the context of their own school, which it first was discussed in this program.

The author thought that showing the students some actual numbers, such as the statistics from the AAUW poll (see Appendix G), they would see how extensive the issue of sexual harassment is. This hand out also answered some of the students questions about why students chose to sexually harass others.

The discussion questions (see Appendix G), the author thought, really helped the students to realize that sexual harassment does not have to be tolerated by them. Most of the students said that they would “beat up” the perpetrator if they were the target or if their best friend was. When popularity of the perpetrator came into question students had a different view about what they would do. Depending on if the target was their best friend or not made a difference if they were to say something to the perpetrator. If the target was unknown to them some said they would just walk away and not do anything.

For class two hand outs were given and read out loud that were about the meaning of sexual harassment, preventing sexual harassment and what students can do in their schools to help others be more informed about sexual harassment (see Appendices H & I). This went along

with the author's goals of teaching the students about sexual harassment and what they could do if it happened to them. Students in all classes never had any questions about these hand outs.

The discussion questions (see Appendix J) that followed the reading of the hand outs some of the students did not understand. When one class was asked if race or social class was a factor, a student started talking about popularity. Other students said that how rich or poor a student was did not make a difference in who was sexually harassed. Most students also said that sexual harassment was happening right in front of teachers. They said it would happen in the halls and in study halls when the teacher was busy doing their own work.

The statements (see Appendix K) provoked many opinions from the students, especially number eight ("Girls' bodies are the only thing that matters to most boys."). Almost all of the girls said it was true and even most of the boys. The boys would then turn around the statement saying that all that matters to girls was boys' bodies. Most classes got into the discussion about being attracted to the other person before they would even talk to them. The students were mostly in agreement for the rest of the statements. Number nine ("A boy who claims he has been sexually harassed is a nerd, wimp, sissy or 'wuss.'"); students did not think this was true and the statement did not generate much discussion. For statement twelve ("When a girl says 'no,' she really means 'yes' or 'maybe' or 'later.'"), at first students thought this statement was untrue, then they decided that the statement depended on how the girl was saying "no." They wondered if she was saying "no" with a giggle was she really saying "no." All of the students agreed that statement thirteen ("If a girl says she is being sexually harassed and the boy says he is only fooling, then it's not sexual harassment.") was untrue and it seemed in most classes that they thought, "How could anyone think the statement was true."

The students seemed to really enjoy the lyrics (see Appendix L), in one class some students even sang along with the music. The author thought this aspect of the program would get the students to really look at the media and what they listened to or even the images they saw on television everyday. The class discussed the songs and even music videos that showed females with hardly any clothes on and what the camera was always aimed at, which was either a woman's breasts or butt. In a study done on sex-role stereotyping in MTV videos, it was found females were often shown as sex objects and often wore more revealing clothing more frequently than men (Seidman, 1999). Due to the popularity of MTV and what audience that channel is aimed at, the author thought this subject was not covered enough in depth, due to lack of time and resources. Possible additions to this aspect of the program might be students watching commercials, music videos, or even movie clips. A discussion might follow about what media is showing students that might make it okay for them to copy, even if it might be considered to be sexual harassment.

In class three the author thought the video was a good wrap up of the program for the students. The movie talked about most of the things discussed in class and went into more depth about laws on sexual harassment. Most students thought the movie was boring and that was the feedback the author got from them. The movie was from 1994, so fashion was dated and even some of the language. One of the students interviewed said that something was "wack," which most of the students in class laughed at.

In the discussion of what students liked or disliked about the program no one spoke up about these questions. After the author told the students that counseling was available no one student or group of students chose to come to the counseling center to discuss the topic of sexual

harassment more. There was also no treatment used due to no student or students asking for help.

Implications for school counselors

This study suggests that counselors can develop and implement a successful educational experience in the classroom. The program also gets students to discuss a difficult topic in a safe group environment through thought provoking activities. The school setting allows a great number of children to be reached without having to form after-school or weekend programs. While this program did not include parents, it would certainly be an asset to let parents know about sexual harassment and how it affects their children, either through reading materials or teaching them about the subject.

School counselors can implement this program at any age, with minor changes that would be appropriate for the age group that is chosen (Schwartz, 2000). For example, to reduce a climate of fear in younger students Shoop and Hayhow (1994) suggested that the curriculum should help students distinguish between contact that they think as threatening, and flirting, which feels good and makes the recipient happy. Stein and Sjostrom (1994) suggested using the term “teasing” or “bullying” for younger students that might not initially know the term “sexual harassment.” As we see from the statistics from the AAUW (1993) survey sexual harassment can happen as early as third grade and even before that, which 7% of girls and 6% of boys experienced sexual harassment before 3rd grade, so a program for third graders could certainly help them to recognize sexual harassment at a younger age.

While sexual harassment might never be eliminated, it is the school counselor’s duty to be there for students who are the perpetrators, targets or even bystanders. School counselors can

also provide training peer leaders to conduct workshops for other students. Peer mediation programs can also be implemented with adult involvement.

Providing students with a sexual harassment program lets the students know that they do have rights to a safe school and that they do not have to put up with sexual harassment in their school. Harassment-Free Hallways (AAUW, 2004) suggested to get students involved with this issue is to have them help write the sexual harassment policy for the school. There are also some example forms for schools to use such as a complaint form and a teen safety plan in Harassment-Free Hallways. Counselors can actively participate with students to get a sexual harassment policy for students to adhere to. Many ideas were mentioned earlier in the literature review that schools could use to create a safer environment for students and certainly counselors can play an active role in getting their schools to put into place curriculums about sexual harassment.

Implications for future research

This study showed that sexual harassment is happening among 8th grade students, which sexual harassment occurred for the first time for 47% of the students in middle school (6th to 9th grade) according to the AAUW (1993) survey. The program also found that students were more knowledgeable about sexual harassment after the program, but the author questioned if the sexual harassment behavior decreased after the program. The author believes that observing the behavior of the students before and after the program could be another way to measure if sexual harassment decreases after the program. Pellegrini (2002) recommended direct observation of students and diary approaches could be useful. This may be a more accurate way to measure sexual harassment between students instead of relying on students for honest answers. Bosworth et al. (1999) argued self-reports, which the surveys were, have limitations. Pellegrini added, “Social desirability and fear of repercussion from administrators may influence students’

responses to self-report measures, even when anonymity is guaranteed.” Table three shows inconsistent results between the pre- and post- test. The author at first thought that because the students had learned more about sexual harassment the results from the pre- and post- surveys differed, but this could also have been from students not wanting their peers to know if they had experienced sexual harassment, which Pellegrini pointed out.

Adding more to the media piece of this program can be an asset to help students recognize how it influences them. Adolescents are vulnerable to messages from the media, and unchecked some of this harassing behavior can lead to more harmful behavior when they become adults, such as domestic violence and hate crimes (Shoop & Hayhow, 1994). A possible addition to the program could be music videos, commercials or even magazine ads that show how women are exploited as sexual objects. A discussion on how media makes it okay for students to sexually harass others could also be another piece added to this program.

To conclude, for most adolescents school is critical to their personal growth and readiness to become part of the adult world. Peer sexual harassment interferes not only with an adolescent’s right to a safe school but also interferes in the process of learning and growing.

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Appendix A

(Letter sent to parents first semester)

(Letter sent to parents second semester)

Appendix B
(Lesson Plan)

Appendix C

Pre- and Post- Test

Appendix D

Pre- and Post- Survey

Appendix E

Flirting vs. Sexual Harassment Lesson

(from Flirting or Hurting)

Appendix F

Handout #1

- Statistics

(from Hostile Hallways)

Appendix G

Discussion Questions #1

(from Flirting or Hurting)

Appendix H

Handout #2

- “What is Sexual Harassment”
(from Flirting or Hurting)

Appendix I

Handout #3

- “Strategies to Prevent Sexual Harassment”
 - “Best Practices”
(from Harassment-Free Hallways)

Appendix J

Discussion Questions #2

(from Flirting or Hurting)

Appendix K

Discussion Statements

(from Flirting or Hurting)

Appendix L

Handout #4

(Lyrics)

